

Inspection of Royal Docks Academy

Prince Regent Lane, Custom House, London E16 3HS

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders ensure that Royal Docks is a happy and safe place for all. Staff are determined that all pupils will succeed.

Leaders have put in place an ambitious curriculum. They want pupils to benefit from knowing and remembering important knowledge in all subjects. Pupils are well supported in their academic and personal development. Staff are aware of each pupil's individual circumstances. They work hard to ensure that there are no barriers to pupils' learning.

Staff challenge pupils to have high standards and aspirations. Pupils appreciate this. They praised the improvements that leaders have made to the school. Pupils are particularly pleased with how leaders and staff help them to learn and behave well.

The school is calm and orderly, and there is very little disruption to learning. Pupils conduct themselves well and are considerate of their peers. Tolerance and respect form the basis for all aspects of the school's work. Leaders and staff prioritise making sure the school's atmosphere is warm and inclusive towards all.

There are many opportunities for pupils to lead and take on responsibility in the school. For example, some act as mentors for younger pupils. Pupils are taught to be confident and respectful members of society.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and governors have developed a curriculum that enables all pupils to achieve well. Leaders have supported staff to grow in both expertise and confidence. This means that in most subjects, staff adapt and teach the curriculum well.

In Years 7 to 9, pupils benefit from a broad and interesting curriculum. It prepares them well for their future study. This is because subjects are planned to build up pupils' knowledge in logical steps. Staff know which pupils need extra help to learn essential knowledge. These pupils receive high-quality support, and this enables them to learn effectively.

Teachers guide pupils' GCSE choices carefully, based on their goals for the future. This includes encouraging more pupils to continue studying languages, history and geography after Year 9.

Reading has a high profile. Staff provide additional phonics teaching for pupils who join with difficulties in reading. This addresses any gaps in pupils' knowledge. In turn, pupils' ability to access reading materials in all subjects also improves. Staff take every opportunity to encourage pupils to read outside of lessons. During regular visits to the library, staff help pupils choose authors they might enjoy. Through the whole-school focus on vocabulary, pupils are taught how to use

academic language. Sometimes, pupils learn subject-specific vocabulary but do not revisit or apply it. As a result, pupils' understanding of this vocabulary does not become fully embedded.

In most subjects, lessons introduce new subject content in a clear and methodical sequence. This ensures that pupils make good progress through the curriculum. Teachers check pupils' understanding carefully. If pupils have not grasped essential ideas, they adapt learning and teach knowledge again. However, this approach is not fully established in some subjects. In a few instances, this means pupils start learning complex content before they are ready.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Lessons are calm, and this means that pupils are able to concentrate. Pupils show tolerance towards one another, and this contributes to the school's warm, welcoming feel.

Pupils receive a thoughtful programme for citizenship and personal, social, health and economic education. For example, pupils receive high-quality guidance about staying safe and how to look after their mental health. Pupils enjoy the range of sports, music and academic clubs like debating. Careers information and advice are well planned and comprehensive.

Leaders have high ambitions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' needs are quickly identified. Pupils receive well-targeted support in lessons, or where needed, in smaller groups. Pupils who attend the resourced provision also benefit from an ambitious curriculum. They are well supported by staff who understand how to help them learn.

Pupils and staff felt well supported by leaders and trustees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff were particularly complimentary about how leaders take into account their workload and welfare.

Governors and trustees work closely with leaders to further improve pupils' quality of education. For example, leaders and staff benefit from being able to work with colleagues from other schools on developing the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff follow clear systems for identifying pupils who may be at risk or need early help. Staff are well trained and know which signs may indicate that a pupil is at risk. As a result, staff are alert and report concerns without delay.

Pastoral and safeguarding staff respond to concerns sensitively and effectively. Leaders are quick to put in place extra help for pupils who need it. They work well with external agencies. For example, they use services offered by external professionals to complement the pastoral care, such as counselling, provided by the school.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. They feel safe and supported.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In most subjects, assessment is used effectively to check pupils' understanding. In a few subjects, however, teachers do not fully check that pupils have the pre-requisite knowledge to learn new ideas. Leaders need to make sure that, in all subjects, teachers check pupils' understanding thoroughly and that their prior learning is secure. This will increase pupils' readiness to understand the learning that comes next.
- Pupils are taught subject-specific vocabulary but sometimes do not revisit and practise it. This reduces pupils' ability to understand and use these words accurately. Leaders need to ensure that pupils develop a secure understanding of essential vocabulary through regular recall and application.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	145410
Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	10205328
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	861
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Drayton
Executive Headteacher	John Blaney
Website	www.royaldocksacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school has a resourced provision which caters for pupils with profound and multiple learning disabilities. The school is currently expanding this provision to cater for students aged 16 to 19.
- This school currently uses one registered alternative provider.
- The careers programme meets the requirement of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Royal Docks Academy converted to become an academy in January 2018. When its predecessor school, Royal Docks Community School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement overall.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the associate headteacher and the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, languages and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and visited lessons in some other subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record and spoke to leaders and staff about their work to keep pupils safe. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about their safety and well-being, behaviour and personal development.
- Inspectors took into account the responses from parents, staff and pupils to Ofsted's surveys, including written comments.

Inspection team

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